

Minutes of the Public Works Committee

Tuesday, March 4, 2008, 7:00 p.m.

Attending: Stephen Braun, Michael Cann, Rob Crowner (chair), Don George, Charlie Moran, Vince O'Connor; Guilford Mooring.

Minutes from last month's meeting, as recorded by Vince, were not available.

Prioritizing Street Repairs for Summer '08 (FY 09)

The committee discussed the recent "field trip" to inspect the condition of Town streets identified on a PWD spreadsheet. Mr. Crowner expressed frustration at the limitations of lists of "to do" streets that only contain one year's worth of streets (typically the next fiscal year). He would like to see a list of priority streets for the next several years at least so that decisions could be made in a more far-sighted way.

Mr. Moran (and others) agreed that a one-year "plan" is insufficient, but Mr. Moran noted that our inability to predict available funds beyond a year or two limits the viability of any priority lists the Committee might draw up.

Mr. Mooring presented a new spread sheet showing the costs of the anticipated repair/reclamation work to be done in the summer of this year (2008) on N. Pleasant, Gaylord St., and Pelham Road. The total cost of this work is projected as \$394,386, which will be paid for through State Chapter 90 allocations.

Mr. Mooring noted that this work will include the repair/reclamation of Pelham Road from the bridge to Poets Corner, an stretch of street that has attracted attention because of its very poor state of repair.

Mr. O'Connor asked about the recent flood on Cottage St. Mr. Mooring replied that the drain on that street had been blocked by some obstruction and that it was "blown out" and that he didn't expect it would be repeated.

Mr. Braun asked whether the roughly \$394,000 cost of this summer's repairs would leave us with about \$50K extra in the budget. Mr. Mooring replied that, in fact, they need to do a final asphalt coat on Henry St., as well as the University Drive work (Big Y intersection and Snell St.) which will use up that money.

The Committee discussed the removal or re-positioning of some of the pedestrian cross-walks on North Pleasant between Massachusetts Avenue and Emerson Street (through UMass). Mr. Mooring noted that UMass needs approval from the Select Board for any installation or alteration of crosswalks. Although there was general agreement that vehicle travel along this route is greatly impeded by the numbers of people using the crosswalks (especially while school is in session) there was some difference of opinion about what to do about it. Mr. O'Connor noted that the existing crosswalks are placed to accommodate real pedestrian flows and that, therefore, removing any might simply encourage "illegal" crossings that would reduce safety. Others wanted to see a study of

the existing crosswalks to determine if any could viably be removed without incurring the adverse safety effects noted by Mr. O'Connor.

After further discussion, Mr. O'Connor moved that the paving and sidewalk repairs and reconstruction priorities for FY '09 (to be completed this coming summer) as detailed on Mr. Mooring's spreadsheet be approved by the committee and presented by Mr. Mooring to the Select Board, with the additional work of resurfacing the area on University Drive affected by the Big Y intersection reconstruction and the "stub" of Snell Street on the South side of Route 9; finishing the top coat on half of Henry Street, and, if funds allow, that drainage work be done on the section of Pelham Road east of Poets Corner as well as the drainage work on Sandhill Road that is needed prior to road reconstruction there.

The motion was seconded and the vote in support was **unanimous in favor**.

Prioritizing Street Repairs for Summer '09 (FY 10)

The Committee discussed in detail the roads under consideration, their state of repair, and other factors affecting their prioritization, including traffic volume and the expected celebrations of the Town Bicentennial.

It was moved that the Committee recommend the following projects as priorities in FY 2010, to be completed in the summer of 2009 (sidewalk construction and/or reconstruction is to be included for all of these projects):

Paving of North Pleasant Street from Amity Street north to Triangle Street
Finish reconstruction and/or drainage work on Pelham Road east of poets corner to the town line
Drainage work on Sandhill Road (if not completed in '08)
Paving of Sandhill Road
Paving of Sellyn St. and the second block of Spring St. between the Amherst College dorms.

The motion was seconded and the vote in support was **unanimous in favor**.

Speed cushions on Lincoln Ave.

Mr. Braun asked whether a decision about installing permanent speed cushions on Lincoln Avenue would affect the placement of that street in the priority rankings for street repairs in the years to come. Mr. Mooring said that, ideally, the DPW would repave the street prior to installing the cushions, but that it would not be either difficult or costly to install them this year and take them up whenever the street was due for repaving in the future...which, by the looks of things, will not be for several years at least.

Long-term solutions

The Committee discussed the issue of inadequate funding for street and sidewalk repairs in Amherst. The DPW spreadsheets show that many town streets are badly in need of repair, but the Chapter 90 funds that the town receives each year from the state is woefully inadequate to the task. Mr. Mooring prepared a spreadsheet listing the street repairs that could be done with additional funds in multiples of \$1 million. It would cost \$2 million to fix just the roads currently in the worst condition. It would cost about \$5 million to “catch up” with all repairs and bring the town to the point that a yearly state “income” of roughly \$500,000 would suffice for ongoing maintenance and repairs.

The Committee heard from Mr. Mooring that he does not have enough money in his budget now to even patch holes or do annual crack sealing...both activities that, if done correctly and promptly, greatly extend the life of a street surface. Acknowledging the short-sightedness and inadequacy of this situation, the committee discussed—but did not agree upon—a number of possible remedies, ranging from a bond issue dedicated to street repairs, to a series of specific “packages” of repairs, such as repairs to specific geographic areas, that could be put forth for possible funding by the Select Board and/or Town Meeting.

It was agreed that further discussion of this issue is needed following consultations with other town staff, such as budget director John Musante.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Next meeting: April 15.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephen Braun, Sec’y *pro tem*.